

Meet the Breed: Range Rover

From its distinctive voice to its rugged good looks, the multipurpose, all-terrain Plott is an American breed through and through.

By Kim Campbell Thornton

The music of the hounds rings through the trees. Catching the scent of their quarry, a black bear, they strike and let loose with their distinctive “chop” – a loud, staccato, ringing bark that sends a message to the hunters: “We’ve found him and we’re hot on his trail.”

Hounds of all types abound, especially in the southern United States, where hunting is still a common way of life. The mountains of western North Carolina are the birthplace of one of America’s few homegrown dogs: the Plott, a big-game hunting dog with a fierce spirit and tenacious nature. In the American South and around the world, it’s often the dog of choice for hunters in search of bears, cougars or hogs, but the breed also has fans among coon hunters, dog-show aficionados and farm families.

Breed development

The Plott is unique among coonhounds for its German heritage. Its ancestors were five Hanoverian schweisshunden (a type of bloodhound) that accompanied Johannes Georg Plott to western North Carolina in 1750. From those five dogs – and probably with a little judicious incorporation of other breeds, including curs – Plott and his descendants bred a line of dogs to hunt bears and other predators they encountered in the new land.

Today, Johannes Georg Plott’s great-great-great grandson, Bob Plott of Statesville, N.C., says it’s an honor and a responsibility to be associated with the breed that bears his name. And he’s proud of the reputation the Plott has made for itself.

“The early Plott dogs were considered by a lot of people to be multipurpose,” Plott says. “They were protectors of families, and they were used as herding dogs and hunting dogs. There are numerous cases of dogs saving children’s lives, things like that.

Want to read the full story? Pick up the October 2009 issue of DOG WORLD today, or subscribe to receive the best dog articles, dog news, and dog information every month!